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COUNTRY LIFE IN FAR HAWAII NEI

(Correspondence Springfield, Mass., Re-
publican.)

The 11 a. m. train from Honolulu
teams along the narrow gauge road that
runs close beside the rough coral and
lava shore, down the steep grade past
the "Barking sands," by some half-dozen
tiny wooden houses, one church and
an equally tiny whitewashed box of a
school, and stops for me to get off at
Makua. Immediately I am surrounded
by a score of hilarious children, natives
and half-whites, fresh from their bath
in the ocean, their hair and bare brown
feet still wet and sticky with sand. They
wear as to the girls, the hideous holoku,
in dark calico—the boys Japanese shirts
and overalls; one girl even boasts a pair
of hula boots, but no stockings. One
seizes my coffee bottle, another my
lunch, and so back along the track we
go to school. It is a special privilege
I have, this of coming on the first train,
as in previous years what teachers Ma-
kua has had rode eight miles from the
nearest plantation village, over a hot,
sandy road, to begin school at the con-
ventional hour of 9. I commence at
11:15, and with a half-hour at 1, close on
the approach of the last train at 3:30
p. m.

Makua is so off the map that outside
of one very much civilized white man,
there are none but natives and a few
Japs and Chinese, who live in this cool
valley of the Waianae mountains. Con-
sequently when I took the school the of-
ficial in the department of education told
me to make my aim the proper use of
the English language. As the children
were all said to talk some English, I
felt this an easy task when I opened
school the 10th of September. It is a
little whitewashed shed, just large
enough for my table and chair and the
benches for the twenty children. Close
beside it is the bellfied church where
service is held once a month or so.
"What kind of a church?" I asked. "Oh,
just plain Christian," said the native, lit-
tle realizing how delightfully broad this
sounded to my cosmopolitan ears, tired
with the jangle of the sects. And yet
when one boy at Christmas asked me if
I had ever seen Jesus Christ, I wonder-
ed what the missionaries had meant
the churches for. I soon found the
English these twenty juveniles knew was
the use of all the worst and lowest
words in our most expressive mother
tongue, and such phrases as, "I been go-
ing to school b'fore." When I talked
they apparently listened attentively, but
on questioning found but few of my
words conveyed their real meaning to
these coffee-colored, big-eyed children,
ranging from 15-years-old Lupua Kaana-
ana to 5-years-old Miala Kaama.

My work was confined to oral instruc-
tion and blackboard work, as the au-
thorities told me to ask for as few sup-
plies as possible, and they also said,
"Your one difficulty will be to get your
pupils to eat enough before school to
keep them awake till 1." So each day
I ask, "Who has not eaten this morn-
ing?" and the culprit is then sent home
to eat. This I seldom have to order, as
to go home from the school here, that
is, white woman, school means "a lick-
ing" from the mother or father, all of
whom are nobly assisting me in my task
of teaching true discipline. Oftentimes
to make the children talk I ask, "What
did you have to eat this morning?"
Abraham always says, "Crabs and salt
fish." Mikala is, I fear, inventive, as she
glibly spins out, "Coffee, pancakes, pol,
fish, rice, sugarcane and crackers," as
this list includes all the usual articles of
food eaten in a day.

They are a most amusing crew, these
twenty children, but few of whom have
ever been to Honolulu, forty miles by
rail, and nearly half not even to the
nearest plantation village. Can one
fancy trying to explain what a city is
when only six have seen a city, and that
is, with only 35,000 or 40,000 inhabitants?
To make them think of size or depth
when their horizon is bounded on one side
by the shining ocean, that is deep, "so
deep you drown," and on the other by
the mountains, whose steep, volcanic
sides offer no attraction to even a hardy
mountain climber, much less to these
indolent people, whose wants are all
supplied when they have a house in
which to sleep if it rains, poi, the uni-
versal dish made from taro, the ocean
from whence to get their fish, crabs and
limu, a species of seaweed, and a few
convenient pigs, cows and horses? Some-
times it seems a hopeless task to make
them comprehend certain words, these
children of a bountiful land. I told them
one day of the famine in India, that be-
cause of no rain there was no food and
no cattle, and that more people died of
hunger in a few months than lived in
all these islands. "Why don't they eat
poi, catch fish, shoot goats, eat limu?"
They hurled one question after another,
and though I carefully explained the
conditions, I saw when I had done a
look of incredulity that showed they
thought famine was only another of
those startling hula tales, like the fa-
mous one of the 2-story building with
elevators which run like express trains
up to the top. This last item had been
received with laughter and cries of de-
light at my ability as an entertainer!

In explaining "rich" the other day, one
girl itemized the expenses of herself and
father for me to show \$500 was "too
much": "Poi \$2.50 a week, crackers \$1
a month, flour \$12 a year, gin \$50 a year,
her clothes, a holoku and muumu 50
cents a month, for her father \$35 a year,
condensed milk \$24 a year," in all not
\$300 a year. Coffee they gather them-
selves from the old trees in the valley,
tobacco they grow and dry at home, fish
and aqueous dainties to be had for the
catching.

One noon I went to a nearby house to
see that "the wriggling eel," as I dub the
5-years-old son of a native, had enough
to eat to keep him awake till the close
of school. I found him squatting in
front of his stove on the sand under the
kiawe tree, frying griddle cakes. This
sounds so absurd, I hasten to say his
stove is a kerosene oil can, the top cut
out and another opening in the side into
which he thrust dry twigs from the kiawe
or algaroba tree, that blessing of the
lowlands. He fried, tossed and browned
them with the air of a chef, as he passed
them to his guests. And this was his
dinner! And yet his father is not at all
poor, often earning \$20 a month diving
for "wana," a crustaceous delicacy great-
ly prized at the native feast. This child
finds it impossible to stand quietly while
reciting or even to sit on the remark-
ably uncomfortable benches. So I gain my
end, peace, punishing him by making him
sit on the floor beside me. One can
hardly deem it a punishment as he curls
himself contentedly into the true native
pose and is thereafter quiet.

One day on my arrival I was greeted
by the news Lupua's uncle had died and
would be buried at noon in the grave-
yard close beside the school. Oh, how

I wished I had never opened school, as
one by one tired heads drooped and big
eyes grew dim. As a rule, this means
lack of breakfast, and the sleepy one is
sent home to eat. But no, they had all
eaten. Then I found that one and all
had been to the "poaleale," similar to
the Irish wake. The children's transla-
tion is "a happy time," for the wailing
is interrupted by eating, drinking, sing-
ing and dancing, which program is kept
up till morning dawns. At 2 I dismissed
school, as the coffin brought that morn-
ing from Honolulu was borne to the
grave by the native men. Women of all
degrees of adiposity, clad in the dress
designed by the missionaries, the holo-
ku, followed, chatting and laughing. A
short prayer in native was said by the
oldest son and then one by one the na-
tives passed the open grave, dropping a
flower and a stone on the coffin for the
peaceful resting of the departed. On the
children's return to school I asked why
they staid all night and did not go home
to get some sleep. "Fraid," they all
replied in thrilling tones. "Of what?"
said skeptical I. "Ghosts," said they.
And when I asked how many had ever
seen a ghost my skepticism was unavailing,
as I saw nearly every hand raised.
One boy volunteered the information he
had seen the late departed's ghost, "Tall
and all in white." Of course, there is
real grief at some beloved one's death,
for on Hawaii I met a native man who,
crazed by his young daughter's death,
had refused consolation and for days at a
time would sit on a rock by the ocean
wailing and refusing nourishment. But
as a rule the native grief is not deep
and shows the childlike characteristics of
the race.

One peculiar quality of the children's
minds is the ability to memorize words
which convey no meaning to their intel-
ligence. When I began to teach them
"Hiawatha" I gave them the lines to
learn:
Downward through the evening twilight
In the days that are forgotten.
and the following four lines as an ex-
periment, simply pronouncing the words,
with no explanation. The next day these
six unintelligible lines were repeated cor-
rectly; but, oh, the lightning of faces
when I explained carefully the meaning.
Talk of lotus blossoms and poppy flowers,
of a soft haze on a shimmering sea to
produce a torpid condition! Why, all I
have to do is to speak gently the magic
word arithmetic to see every muscle
grow limp and dull, unseeing eyes. I
defy the professors of mathematics in
all the eastern colleges to hold these
children's attention more than 10 min-
utes.

To them singing is the one unmixed
joy of school life. When the term opened
their repertoire of English songs were
"Toiling on," "Casting all," "To the
work" and "Kiawe tree." These are the
titles they gave. Besides these they
knew innumerable and unending hulas,
as the native song and dance is termed.
The dance is that interesting one "where
the ladies move their belts," as a young
man politely described the Hawaiian
"danse du ventre." The songs are nearly
all so bad as to be untranslatable, though
the airs are beautiful.

Their knowledge of geography was
startling in the extreme. In mentioning
cities, London, Paris and New York
brought not a gleam to their question-
ing eyes. But when I casually mentioned
St. Louis and Milwaukee, their faces
brightened. Oh, yes, they all knew those
places. Why? Simply—oh ye shades of
missionaries departed—because special
brands of beer were made there. Of
course, this little school must not be
thought of as a sample one, for nearer
Honolulu and in the city the schools
compare most favorably with those of
the far East. It is only in the districts
far away from the influence of the better
class of whites that the native Hawai-
ians are still living very near to their
primitive life. It is a terrible fact to
realize that it is the villainess of our
white brothers that is adopted by these
children of a civilization not 100 years
old. It is only when one meets a re-
fined, highly-bred Hawaiian, polished by
travel and eastern schools, that one can
see the power for good, we Americans
have over the tractable native.

In some ways it seems a hopeless task
to permanently influence these children,
so utterly devoid of morality, few of
whose parents speak English, and whose
environment gives them little chance to
come in contact with the better class
of haoles, as the white race is termed.
But always before my mind is the
knowledge of the progress of the Hawai-
ian people in 100 years, and that even
in this small way I am helping to the
upward life one of the kindest peoples
on this fair earth.

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